- 7 NOV 1995

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, JFK Assassination Records Review Board

FROM: David Cohen
Deputy Director for Operations

SUBJECT: Release of JFK Documents

1. I understand the JFK AARB is presently considering the release of documents which would identify CIA stations to the public. I am opposed in general to revealing the locations of our stations and would prefer instead to substitute the station name with a regional designation, e.g. European Station vice Brussels. I would be willing, however, to open certain stations during a specific window of time if they are substantively relevant to the assassination investigation and provided that the documents in question are sanitized to conceal the permanent presence of the station. (S)

2. In all but a handful of instances, public acknowledgment of a station would be a political embarrassment to the host government and would threaten ongoing sensitive operations and liaison relationships. In a few instances, the damage probably would be minimal or not at all as long as the presence appears to be temporary. I have surveyed the involved components and determined the damage to national security which would follow such release. (S)

3. I strongly urge that you not allow the information regarding the Congo and Senegal to be released. The Congo is now Zaire and the station in the 60's would have been in Leopoldville, now Kinshasa where we are currently located. Our current relationship with the Zaireans is not a full-blown liaison type, but more of a limited relationship with certain individuals from the services. In the past, we have had close

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relationships with the Zaireans because of our need for their cooperation in assisting with a Presidentially-mandated program and will need to improve our relationship over the next several months to accomplish our goals in that part of the world. We also continue to have a Station in Dakar, Senegal. We have liaison there and would not want to jeopardize it. In dealing with developmental contacts, there have been recent instances where potential assets have voiced concern about our Agency's ability to keep its relationships clandestine. To expose our station there would further hamper developmental relationships and eventual recruitments. (S)

4. Within the context of our European presence, I have the following comments:

Brussels - Public acknowledgment would force the government and liaison service to pay closer attention to Station operations and therefore present a threat to ongoing sensitive operations. (S)

Helsinki - A neutral country. Public acknowledgment of a CIA station would embarrass the government and liaison; thereby inhibiting the close and productive liaison relationships we now enjoy as well as presenting a threat to ongoing sensitive operations. (S)

Paris - No additional damage. (S)

Bonn - No specific damage. (S)

Berlin - No specific damage. (S)

Luxembourg - Public acknowledgment would embarrass the government and inhibit liaison cooperation; thus endangering ongoing operations. (S)

The Hague - Public acknowledgment would draw questions from the press and create political problems for the government and liaison. This would endanger the continuation of sensitive joint operations. (S)

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Oslo - Public acknowledgment would draw questions from the press and threaten very productive and very sensitive ongoing joint operations. (S)

Madrid - Public acknowledgment would draw press attention and embarrassing questions for the government and liaison service. This would further damage an already delicate liaison relationship which is vital to us for counterterrorism operations. (S)

Stockholm - A neutral country. Public acknowledgment would be politically embarrassing for the government and liaison services. This would likely endanger any continuation of joint operations. (S)

Geneva - A neutral country. Public acknowledgment would create political problems for the government and liaison service and force greater attention to our operations. This would create an intensive counterintelligence atmosphere for our operations; likely to cause a decrease in our operations. (S)

London - No specific damage. (S)

Ottawa - No specific damage. (S)

5. Our Eastern European stations pose a unique problem when we consider public exposure. Prague Station is recovering from operating for almost fifty years in an undeclared status. During the last three years we have managed, with much effort, to begin the establishment of good working relations with the host government and internal/external services. As a result, the station has recently begun some very sensitive and high-level bilateral operations. These obviously depend upon the good will of the host service. The Czech citizenry came of age in an atmosphere in which distrust of intelligence services in general, and the CIA in particular, was thoroughly ingrained. That distrust lingers in the public's mind even today. Exposure of our station's previously undisclosed presence and operational activities during the Cold War will necessarily raise questions about our activities then, and almost certainly lead to further

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inquiry about our present relationship. It is doubtful that our relationship, and certainly our very sensitive operations, could withstand the resulting public debate. The existence of Prague Station, past and present, cannot be surfaced at this time without serious damage to national security. (S)

6. Public acknowledgment of our stations in Managua, San Jose, Panama City, San Salvador, Santo Domingo, Buenos Aires, Lima, Santiago, and Montevideo would not further damage our operational capabilities in a specific sense. Overall, any release of information about a clandestine service breeds distrust in professionalism and will put future operations at risk. (S)

7. We receive significant national collection systems support from Australia which affects national system collection efforts against Tier IA targets throughout Asia. We would jeopardize this by releasing the presence of our station to the public. Tokyo is a special case in that there is continuing disagreement regarding our station. We should not complicate the current "Spy Mania" atmosphere in Tokyo. There have been two incidents regarding our presence in Japan during the present year. Any further disclosure would exacerbate the tension and create an untenable operational atmosphere for our station and personnel. (S)

8. Public acknowledgment of a station in India would be a problem for the U.S. Government. U.S. and India foreign relations are always delicate; the Indian Government is very sensitive to perceived slights to its national sovereignty, and public acknowledgment of a station would prove embarrassing to the Indian Government which in turn could ask that the station be closed. If the station were closed or significantly downsized, it would affect a large number of important intelligence collection operations. (S)

9. Public acknowledgment of a station in Tunisia would be a problem for Tunisia vis-à-vis its Libyan neighbor. Libya and Tunisia share a border which means the Tunisian Government must act with some prudence regarding its relations with Libya. The Libyan Government would almost certainly respond very negatively

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to a public acknowledgment of a station in Tunisia and might well engage in harassment/sabotage/terrorist actions in Tunisia to show its displeasure. If the Tunisian Government should ask that our station be closed, the U.S. Government would lose a capability to collect on Libya, north African stability, and Islamic extremism. (S)

10. Public acknowledgment of a station in Morocco would be a problem for Morocco vis-à-vis its Islamic fundamentalist population. Morocco, like so many countries with a majority Muslim population, has a growing Islamic fundamentalist problem, and Islamic fundamentalists are frequently opposed to the U.S. in general and the Agency in particular. Public acknowledgment of a station in Morocco could cause its Islamic fundamentalist population to react negatively and demand that our station be closed. If the station were closed, the U.S. Government would lose intelligence on the western Sahara conflict, north African stability and Islamic extremism. (S)

11. In those instances where I have indicated damage to operational capability and national security, I would feel compelled to seek a reversal of any decision to make a public acknowledgment. In those cases where I indicate "no specific or additional damage", I am prepared to accept your decision yet I must call your attention to the general damage done to us by any disclosure of operational presence. Our operational capabilities are in direct proportion to the confidence placed in our ability to protect source identities and operational methods. Disclosure to the public of our presence weakens this confidence. (S)

David Cohen